

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

March 8, 2008

Raph A. McMullen Conference Center

Higgins Lake, MI

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bud Dankers at 9:00 a.m.

Joe Robison introduced the new members; Bill Roth, James Carpenter, James Bias members at large and Amy Spray representing MUCC.

Roll Call:

Members Present:

Todd Alofs, Vice Chairman	John Huffman
James Bias	Ralph Kandt
Randy Buller	John Kurkowski
Neil Carlson	Terry Laymon
James Carpenter	Ken Martin
Paul Conners	Bill Roth
Bud Dankers, Chairman	Ron Sefcik
Ken Dodge	Amy Spray
Dave Hohlfeldt	Don Tarry

Members Absent:

John Thompson

18 members present thus there is a quorum.

14 votes required to pass any motion.

MDNR Staff Present:

Mike Bailey, Joe Robison, Dave Luukkonen, Ernie Kafcas, Earl Flegler, Lori Sargent, Nick Kalejs, Rob Aho, Erin Call, Jennifer Kleitch and Sgt. Dave Shaw.

The minutes from the August 4, 2007 meeting were presented with one correction noted by Ron Sefcik. Minutes were approved.

Motion: Terry Laymon Support: John Huffman
For= 18 Against= 0 Motion Passed

Joe Robison reviewed the C.W.A.C. mission statement and goals.

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee mission: Provide feedback to the DNR-Wildlife division on existing and proposed waterfowl regulations and wetland management issues. CWAC members must present views and concerns which represent stakeholders from their areas of the state and disseminate information learned at CWAC meetings back to those stakeholders.

Mike Bailey presented memo from Director Humphries and explained fiscal situation of the Michigan DNR.

1. He addressed that there was an increase in Youth license sales and a decrease in spending which resulted in a positive \$10.5 million dollar balance in the DNR budget.
2. Mike reported that the Senate Fiscal Committee findings concur with the DNR findings, and the fund balance of \$10.5 million dollars will cover fiscal year 2008, but not fiscal year 2009. The DNR is still spending more than they bring in revenue.
3. Ken Dodge asked about new hires into the Michigan DNR and it was addressed by Mr. Bailey.
4. Amy Spray of MUCC addressed the \$10.5 million dollar fund balance of the DNR and communicating information to the public as to where it came from.
5. Ken Martin asked Mr. Bailey for suggestions on how to fund the DNR in the future, and Mr. Bailey answered those concerns.
6. Mr. Bailey also informed us that they are trying to fill the Waterfowl Specialist Position and currently Lori Sargent is the interim acting Waterfowl Specialist.

Feedback from 2007 Waterfowl season

Representatives presented their findings from the groups and individual stakeholders whom they represent.

1. Overall duck season was listed as being fair. Many thought the start date was too early and the weather was too warm. Season improved as the weather got colder.

2. Goose seasons were fair or spotty in the Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower. Southern Lower Goose season was listed as Good.
3. Overall consensus was to start seasons for ducks later.
4. Hunters enjoyed amount of goose and duck overlap and the additional days a field due to the goose season.

Waterfowl Workgroup Presentations

Ernie Kafcas-Lake St. Clair Area

1. Weather and water have been inconsistent.
 - Spring was average for precipitation and temperature.
 - Summer was dry and warm
 - Fall; October was unseasonably warm but November brought colder weather and precipitation.
 - Winter was variable for weather.
2. Hunter trips and harvests were down in the managed areas. The Flats started slow but the colder weather brought success. 2 Day late season was successful for puddlers and divers.
3. Dabbling Ducks saw a decrease in staging birds, pintails, widgeon and gadwall. Mallards were flat. Diving ducks saw inconsistent rafting due to mild weather, lots of boat traffic, and lots of weekend layout pressure.
4. Early goose season saw decreased success because the migration was behind schedule. Regular and Late season goose hunting was good early, but it got tougher as it got later.
5. Seeing die offs of Canvasbacks, Swans, and Redheads. Increased pressure from layout hunting and boat traffic negatively impacting birds.

Nik Kalejs-Southwestern MI-Muskegon Office

1. Habitat has decreased due to summer drought. Marsh systems are low and dry. October temperatures were above normal and precipitation was low causing dry conditions.
2. Opening day of duck season was poor to fair. Duck hunter numbers were consistent with 2006 season.
3. November saw an increase in black ducks and mallards, the highest duck counts were in October, due to large numbers of ruddies and shovelers.
4. 2 day late season was okay, hunters reported doing very well.

5. Goose season was spotty to slow in the early season. The Regular season was decent to average, and the late season was difficult, with some hunters doing good and others doing bad.
6. Managed area of Allegan saw a decrease in hunter trips and goose harvests.
7. Managed area of Muskegon saw a decrease in hunter trips, harvest, and goose numbers. Migration timing was similar as in past years for ducks. Goose migration was later than usual. No early peaks in October. Lots of fields cut for silage.

Break 10:30 a.m., reconvened 10:35 a.m.

Earl Flegler-Mid-Michigan Rose Lake Office

1. Managed area has seen positive results from farming operations.
2. Opening day saw decline in mallard numbers, good woodduck numbers, no blue wing teal, and not a lot of green wing teal.
3. Crowded for the late 2 day season.
4. Discussion about decrease in mallard numbers for local populations. Discussion involving water levels and population status.

Rob Aho-Western U.P.- Baraga Office

1. Habitat conditions were extremely dry and poor growing conditions.
2. Opening day of duck season had low water levels and low numbers of duck hunters. Hunter harvest was down approximately 80% from 2006.
3. Increased precipitation in September and October, then a swift transition to winter in November resulted in early freeze up. Birds left and hunting was over.
4. Geese saw improving numbers due to farming practices. Early goose season saw the migrant geese showing up by September 9th which was very early.

Eryn Call-East U.P. Sault Ste. Marie Office

1. Weather was similar to the western Upper Peninsula.
2. Duck season opener resulted in 3.5 birds harvested per hunter. Increase in green wing teal, decrease in hunter numbers and water levels.

3. Question raised regarding hunting closure along the St. Mary River near Sault Ste. Marie. Possible safety zone issue for city.

Joe Robison-Southeastern Michigan -Pointe Mouillee Office-CWAC
Coordinator

1. Habitat saw a decrease in rainfall and increase in temperatures throughout the fall.
2. Harvest numbers increased, 2nd best harvest on record since 1978 in the Managed Waterfowl Area. Bags consisted of mallards, wood ducks and teal.
3. Goose hunters were very happy and duck hunters were happy with the overlap.
4. We lost 3 days of hunting due to freeze up within the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area.
5. Slow trickle migration.
6. The Early goose season was a weird one. With the wheat fields being harvested early, rains and warm weather forced the geese out of the area two weeks prior to the early goose season.

Barb Avers-Saginaw Bay-Shiawassee Office, not present

1. Lost 1 week of hunting because of freeze up.
2. Low water and not a lot of ducks. More divers and less mallards.

Lori Sargent -Interim Waterfowl Specialist

1. Numbers of dabbling ducks have declined while the number of diving ducks has increased.

Dave Luukkonen

1. In general, managed areas will continue to operate the same in 2008 as they did in 2007—but, as usual, changes in water levels and weather may impact local area operations.
2. Discussion regarding using coots as a biological indicator. Coots have been declining on their breeding grounds in the eastern U.S., but this does not seem to be related to harvest.
3. Question posed regarding quota on mute swans. DNR stated there is currently no annual quota for removal of mute swans, although there are goals pertaining to collecting birds to sample for avian influenza.

4. Sandhill crane numbers are increasing. Questions regarding opening a season, but a Flyway management plan and concurrence by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be needed to allow for a season. Cranes are not on the state list of Michigan game species and so even if there was Federal approval, the legislature would have to allow for the first season. This is an item for possible consideration in the long term future.

Sgt. Dave Shaw -Law Enforcement

1. Reported on every district excluding Detroit did not have these numbers available yet. Total of 236 arrests were made which was down by 100 from 2006.
2. 14 new officers have been hired, but Law Enforcement has lost 18 officers, mostly supervisors, over the year. Overall decrease in the number of officers.
3. No overtime available for Fish and Game last year.
4. Priority violations were down:
 - Toxic shot violations decreased.
5. Late 2 day season is a tax on officers.
6. Addressed possibility of setting up a waterfowl task force to patrol high use areas and saturate areas to check for violations.
7. Asked for contact information throughout the season with specific locations and information. Help officers catch violators by being less vague.
8. Addressed hiring of new officers that were pre-certified in law enforcement to save money on training.

Issues about late 2 day season rose from general attendees in regard to baiting, over bagging, and late shooting.

Lunch 12 p.m. Reconvened 12:50 p.m.

2006 Waterfowl Harvest Survey -Joe Robison

1. There is a continued decreasing trend in the number of duck hunters.
2. The number of ducks harvested has been variable. Specific numbers provided in the packets.
3. Most waterfowl hunters are happy with the season structure.

Opening Day 2007 Waterfowl Results-Joe Robison

1. Opening Day Bag results across 21 locations saw a decrease in waterfowl abundance. Average of 1.4 waterfowl (ducks and geese) per hunter were harvested.
2. Harvest numbers from 2006 were better than 2007. This season was considered average.

Canvasback Survey -Joe Robison

1. Survey was conducted during the 1st week of November and we have done this survey since 1974. Most of the birds were observed on the Canadian side of Lake St. Clair, the bulk of which were canvasbacks, with some redheads and scaup.
2. Survey covered Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River, and the western basin of Lake Erie. Very few on the American side. Most likely due to the hunting pressure and boating pressure.

Mississippi Flyway Issues Update -Dave Luukkonen

1. Michigan mallard population goals: support a spring population of 420,000 birds when Great Lakes water levels are near their long term average.
2. Listed the representatives to the Mississippi Flyway council for Michigan.
3. Presented Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations schedule and dates of meetings.
4. Summary of recommendations to flyway council relevant to C.W.A.C. presented:
 - Regular season goose openings framework for MI and WI.
 - Support revised SJBP Canada goose Management Plan.
 - Support for AHM Duck package used for 2007-08 season, except add one step constraint.
 - Do not endorse proposed implementation of AHM for Western Mallards.
 - Endorse maintaining existing strategy for pintail harvest management.
 - Endorse new interim black duck harvest strategy.

- Endorse a wood duck harvest strategy that would allow a 3 bird daily bag limit.
 - Delay implementation of a new scaup harvest strategy pending development of additional harvest models.
 - Implement a new canvasback harvest strategy based on breeding population abundance triggering levels.
5. Discussions regarding canvasbacks and black duck populations.

Action Items for C.W.A.C.

1. Endorse proposed goose zone changes which include establishing proposed Regular Goose Management units to align with the duck zones, a 45 day Regular Goose season, and increasing the bag limit for the early season from 3 to 5 birds.
2. Regular Canada goose season dates for zones opening prior to September 27 (but no earlier than September 16).
3. Federal Youth Waterfowl Season.

(1) Action Item- Bud Dankers made a motion to endorse proposed goose zone changes and align them with the current duck zones.
Supported by Dave Hohlfeldt. Vote: For= 18 Against= 0
Motion Passed

*Discussion regarding changing order of action items and setting Federal Youth Waterfowl season before establishing the Regular Canada Goose season dates. So changed.

(2) Action Item- James Bias made a motion to set the dates for the Youth waterfowl season statewide as September 20 and 21.
Supported by Ron Sefcik.
Vote: For= 17 Against= 0 Abstained=1 Motion Passed

(3) Action Item- James Bias made a motion that the regular goose season in the Upper Peninsula open on Monday September 22 and run for 45 days. Supported by Ken Dodge. Vote: For= 18 Against= 0
Motion Passed

(4) Action Item- Motion made by Bud Dankers to increase the daily bag limit of geese during the early season from 3 to 5 birds.

Supported by Terry Laymon. Discussion followed. Vote: For= 12

Against= 6 Motion Failed

(4a.) Motion made by Ken Sefcik to keep the current 3 bird daily bag limit during the early goose season. Supported by

Vote: For= 8

Against= 10 Motion Failed

(4b.) Motion made by James Carpenter to increase the daily bag limit of geese during the early season from 3 to 4 birds. Supported by Dave Hohlfeldt

Vote: For= 8

Against= 10 Motion Failed

(4c.) Motion made by Ralph Kandt to increase the daily bag limit of geese during the early season from 3 to 5 birds. Supported by Terry Laymon. Discussion followed. Vote: For= 14

Against= 4

Motion Passed

4. Opening day for early goose season will be September 1st.

Habitat Initiatives

Ernie Kafcas- Discussed NAWCA Grant issues and areas of implementation. Discussion of Saginaw Bay to Lake Erie on 2nd go around. Grants used for protection, enhancement, and acquisition of lands. Possible new project in Southwest MI.

Lori Sargent- Joint Venture Annual Report. Presented portions of annual report, not all are reporting. 9,952 total acres have been protected and \$1.3 million dollars has been contributed.

Joe Robison- Discussed NICWIC grants. Southeast MI has received two of them in the past year for land acquisitions.

Mike Bailey- Resident Canada Goose Workgroup will stay the same. Increase in amount of work for the group. 800 birds relocated within MI.

5500 additional birds will be translocated within MI. 3100 birds translocated to Kentucky.

Chairman Bud Dankers has finished his term and Vice Chairman Todd Alofs will take over next meeting.

Action Item- Schedule Next Meeting. Bud Dankers made a motion to schedule the next meeting at or near the Bay City State Park during the weekend of August 2, 2008. Supported by Terry Laymon. Discussion followed. Vote: For= 16 Against= 1 Abstained=1 Motion Passed

Meeting Adjourned at 3:10 p.m.